

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Consumer Protection and Safety Division
Rail Transit and Crossings Branch
Rail Crossings Engineering Section

RESOLUTION SX-70
February 16, 2006

RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION SX-70. GRANTING AUTHORIZATION TO DEVIATE FROM THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 7.8 OF GENERAL ORDER 75-C BY MODIFYING THE SOUNDING OF BELLS AT THE SACRAMENTO REGIONAL TRANSIT DISTRICT HIGHWAY-RAIL CROSSINGS AT ROYAL OAKS DRIVE AND OXFORD STREET IN THE CITY OF SACRAMENTO IN SACRAMENTO COUNTY.

SUMMARY

By letter dated December 13, 2005, Sacramento Regional Transit District (District), requested an exemption from the provisions of Section 7.8 (warning aspect) of General Order 75-C by providing that the bells on the warning devices located on the south side of the crossings at Royal Oaks Drive (CPUC# 83N-3.75) and Oxford Street (CPUC# 83N-3.35) in the City of Sacramento (City) sound only during the initial warning and descent stage of the gates at the crossings. This resolution authorizes the requested exemption.

DISCUSSION

Section 7.8 of General Order 75-C requires the constant ringing of bells at highway-rail grade crossings when the warning devices are activated by passing trains. This includes sounding during the entire duration of the warning device activation; from the initial warning and descent of the gates until the train has passed and the gates rise and reach the fully vertical position and the warning devices cease.

The District originally requested a full gate down bell variance for the crossings at Royal Oaks Drive and Oxford Street. That would have allowed the bells to cease as soon as the gates reached the horizontal position. After review, the request was rejected by Rail Crossings Engineering Section staff (staff). Staff rejected support of the District request due to pedestrian generators adjacent to the crossings. The Oxford crossing is in close proximity to a District station and a small City park, and the Royal Oaks crossing is adjacent to another District station. Subsequent to staff's rejection of the District's original proposal, the District requested a follow-up meeting. At that meeting, a compromise was reached between staff and the District, so that staff could support a revised District proposal regarding the bells at these crossings.

The letter dated December 13, 2005 requests authorization to modify only the warning devices on the side of the crossings closest to the residences in that area. This pertains to the device on the south side of each crossing. The bell on the south warning devices will sound when the gate is activated and will be silenced when the gate reaches the fully lowered, horizontal position. The bell on the north side warning device at each crossing will sound continuously, until the warning devices deactivate when the train has passed, thereby continuing to give an audible warning to pedestrians in the area.

Rail Crossings Engineering Section staff conclude that the proposal is a safe and reasonable alternative to the requirements for continuously ringing bells at Royal Oaks Drive and Oxford Street. It will provide for some relief to local residences from the disturbances that might be created by the continuous sounding of the bells, while providing for continued safety of pedestrians in the vicinity of the crossing. Additionally, there is precedent for such a request, in that the Commission has granted similar variance requests for bell silencing in residential areas.

This is an uncontested matter in which the resolution grants the relief requested. Accordingly, pursuant to Public Utilities Code Section 311 (g)(2), the otherwise applicable 30-day period for public review and comment is being waived.

FINDINGS

1. The District requested, by letter dated December 13, 2005, the authority to modify the sounding of bells at the Royal Oaks Drive (CPUC# 83N-3.75) and Oxford Street (CPUC# 83N-3.35) crossings of their tracks in the City of Sacramento.
2. Staff has reviewed the proposal and finds that the request has merit and should be granted.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED THAT:

Sacramento Regional Transit District is authorized to deviate from the provisions of Section 7.8 of General Order 75-C by modifying the sounding of the bells so that sounding occurs only during the initial warning and descent stage, until the gates are in the horizontal position, for the grade crossing warning devices located on the south side of the crossings at Royal Oaks Drive (CPUC# 83N-3.75) and Oxford Street (CPUC# 83N-3.35) in the City of Sacramento. Bells at the north side of each crossing will continue to sound for the full duration of the active warning.

This resolution is effective today.

I hereby certify that this resolution was adopted by the Public Utilities Commission at its regular meeting on February 16, 2006. The following Commissioners approved it:

/s/ STEVE LARSON
STEVE LARSON
Executive Director

MICHAEL R. PEEVEY
President
GEOFFREY F. BROWN
DIAN M. GRUENEICH
JOHN A. BOHN
RACHELLE B. CHONG

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Commissioners